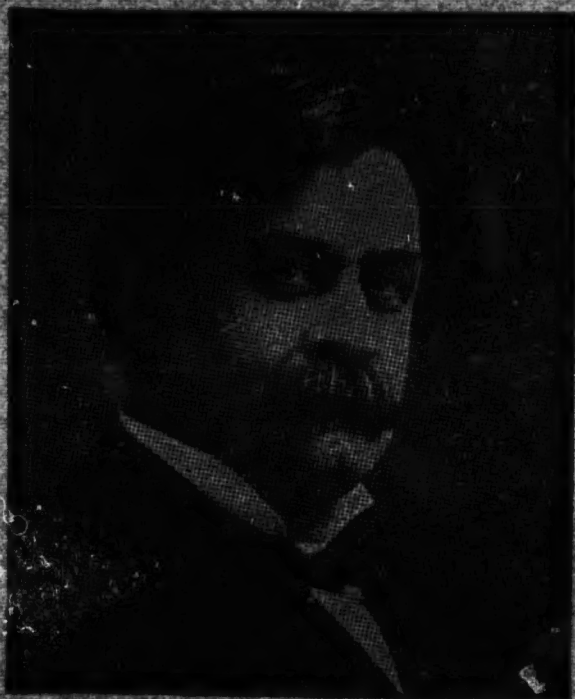


THE CURSE OF THE DOUBLE STANDARD



BY

DR. JAMES L. GORDON, D.D.

Author of

"All's Love, Yet All's Law"

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Curse of the Double Standard

“For I am the Lord your God”—that expression is the driving end of the wedge. Every nation has its own conception of the character of God. No nation or civilization ever rises higher than its religious ideals. Every type of civilization is the product of a peculiar type of creed. Israel had a great creed: it was expressed in the idea of one God, pure, solitary and righteous.

This was Israel's contribution to the thought of the world, “I am God and beside me there is none else.” It took humanity four thousand years, at least, to ascend the heights of that splendid ideal. Therefore Moses speaks in the name of Israel's God—“Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: For I am the Lord your God.”

In this discourse I plead for honest thought. Remember the words of Doctor Samuel Johnson, that splendid old English philosopher—words addressed to Boswell, his biographer—“Young man, clear your mind of cant!” The trinity of insincerity is a double mind, a double face and a double standard. Beware of the man who is the incarnation of these three. Of course a man may have a double standard—a phase of thought which he has accepted from the social environment which he has inherited—without necessarily having a double mind, but the man who begins with a double standard, inherited or inherent, will probably end with a double mind. So, young man, clear your mind of cant. Remember that right thinking is the mother of right

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doing and wrong thinking is the mother of wrong doing—you can't think crooked and live straight.

A double standard is a dangerous thing for a nation or an individual. When the Roman Empire was fast falling to its doom, it was said that every man had two religions, namely, the one which he professed and the other one which he believed. There is not room in the universe for more than one God, nor room in the heart of man for more than one religion. A man should be honest in his religious thinking and sincere in his attitude toward God. This is the corner stone in the granite wall of character.

But the double standard is going. It is being driven out of every realm of human thought from the highest to the lowest. To illustrate, there was a day in the history of the world when there was a double standard in theology, to wit, one class was supposed to be predestinated to be saved and another class predestinated to be lost. Thanks to a little gentleman by the name of John Wesley that doctrine is gone and gone forever: since the father of Methodism began to ring the changes on. "Whosoever will" the double standard in theology has disappeared. "If you will, God wills and if you won't the devil will"—as "Sam" Jones used to say. Of course—John Wesley was not a profound theologian. No practical man ever is. John Wesley broke the theological fetters of a thousand years, but of course he was not a great theologian. Henry Ward Beecher enthroned the ideal of divine love in the hearts of men and set the pace for the American pulpit but of course he was not a great thinker. The great thinker

of the theological type is the man who thinks over the thoughts of so-called "theologians"—thoughts which have been thought to death. Let us be straight in our cogitations and clear in our thinking, even if our chosen creeds crack and our favorite doctrines decline. Oh Christian, clear your mind of cant.

There was a time when men of genius like Byron, Burns and Goethe were supposed to be above the laws, rules and regulations which have been ordained to govern ordinary people—but God never recognized the distinction. When our beloved Scottish poet, Robert Burns, swept by the social dissipations which were sadly characteristic of the day in which he lived—when "Bobbie" Burns, in a drunken stupor, lay down one chill night on the cold flagstones to sleep off the results of an over allowance of Scottish hospitality—nature, seemingly, failed to recognize the fact that he was "a child of genius." The chilling winds of the north swept over him just as ruthlessly as though he had never written a poem or breathed a brilliant syllable, and in less than a year the great man was in his grave. Nature recognizes no such thing as a "double standard."

Young man, write the words of Thackeray on the wall of your room and read over them until they flame emblazoned on the inner wall of your imagination. Here they are:

"Sow a thought and reap an act
Sow an act and reap a habit
Sow a habit and reap a character
Sow a character and reap a destiny."

The double standard! I know how

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that phrase is applied in a special and particular way in the social realm. We have witnessed such plays as: "A Man's World" and "As a Man Thinketh." Splendid dramatic productions, aimed to strike a blow at such shallow standards of social ethics as permit the opening of the doors of modern society for the admission of moral lepers who possess gold and fame and power, while the victims of their foul leprosy are crowned with contempt and thrown out into the cold night of social exclusion and pious disdain—but I am trying to deal with the subject in a broader way. We have a double standard in society because we have a double faced sophistry interwoven into the very fibre of our modern thought. We are crooked in our cogitations and lame in our thinking. For the social leper I have a supreme contempt. But what must be the sensualists' contempt for himself when memory speaks, when conscience speaks, when the shadows of time begin to gather, when his own children cluster about his knee, when parental concern for his own loved ones brings into view a standard of morality which he saw fit to ignore or violate in the days of his youth.

Who is the happy husband, he
Who scanning his unwedded life
Thanks heaven, with a conscience free,
T'was faithful to his future wife.

But I prefer, this evening, to deal with my subject in a more general way. For I am convinced that the need of the world is sincerity. Honest thinking is the foundation of every true achievement and the secret of all genuine progress. Let us clear our minds of cant.

In dealing with "The Curse of the Double Standard," I wish to remark in the first place:

1. There is a double standard at work in the church, socially, where one man is more welcome than another. If there is one place more than another where a pure democracy ought to be enthroned it is in the church.

The social circle of Christian men and women which is not large enough to lovingly and sympathetically contemplate and include all humanity in its desires and designs is not large enough to be spoken of as "New Testament Christianity."

The link which holds humanity together is man's need of man. You have something for every man, and every man has something for you. Faithful exchange produces wealth. Failure to exchange results in poverty. He is your neighbor who needs your neighborly acts the most.

There will come a day in the history of the next ten decades, when the narrow bark of social and commercial competition will be lost forever in the profound depths of the ocean of human co-operation.

It is a sad day for the church when it begins to bid for the "influence" of fashionable society. Then the question of admission into the church is not, "How much of God has he in his heart?" but "How much gold does he bring in his hand?" It is not, "What does he believe?" but "How much can he bequeath?" The question, then, is not, "What are his convictions?" but "What are his connections?"

The test of a man, socially, is the way in which he treats those who are socially below him. Anybody and

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everybody, including innumerable nobodies, are polite to those who are above them. The true Somebody is true to every member of the lower body.

Men servants and maid servants, and their masters and mistresses, in the social evolution of the third and fourth generation, seem to follow a zigzag line, by which the children of those who now have their waiting maids and their masculine counterparts, will wait upon the children of these same waiting men and waiting maids. The day of judgment is wrapped up in the destined average, which is the final adjustment.

People who are too good to associate with the common people, are, in my opinion, not good enough for the common people to associate with. Any man who is good enough for God to create must be good enough for me to regard as an associate, so far as I can elevate and inspire him to imitate the One who created him.

All classes are not to be leveled into one class, but all classes are to be lifted into one first and highest class. All things in common means nothing common in anything pertaining to man.

Caste is an invisible wall, as high as heaven and deeper than the grave. May heaven cyclone the "click" and cast out the evil spirit of caste—the one thing which stands in the pathway of Christianity in foreign lands, and in lands not foreign, is the personification of petrified form, which is, being interpreted—CASTE. Grind it to powder.

Caste is the word used to designate the last stage in the evolution of a civilization. Caste, resting upon the surface of society, and projecting its fatal shadow downward, is nothing better than a sort of plaster of paris

mould, pressed down by the fingers of fate upon the bloodless face of a dead civilization, and mercifully struck off at the expiring moment, to preserve the fashion-featured physiognomy, as a solemn warning to all future generations of the farce and folly of human existence when fact is sacrificed to fashion and force to form.

2. There is a double standard at work in the pulpit when the pulpit orator preaches one thing while he believes another. A true preacher must think his own thoughts and speak his own mind. Hypocrisy is a thousand times more dangerous than heresy. The one sin which blights and blasts the influence of a preacher is insincerity.

What a compliment was that which was paid to Savonarola, and what a reflection on the priesthood of the middle ages, too, were the words of Lorenzo the Magnificent: "This man is a true monk and the only one I have ever seen." Lorenzo did not like Savonarola but he was compelled to respect him. Respect is better than admiration. I would rather be powerful than popular:

"He is a slave who dare not be
In the right with two or three."

The true preacher must be an original thinker. He must think for himself. He must speak for God. Ideas must grip his soul like a vise. He must be aflame with genuine convictions and aglow with the intoxication of Truths which make an irresistible appeal to his soul. He must be real.

The pew has a right to demand of the pulpit all that the pulpit has a right to demand of the pew, and in the gift of fluent speech and clear thinking a little bit more; and the pew demands

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for the pulpit men with the logic of divine truth in their heads, the choicest Anglo-Saxon nouns, verbs, adjectives and metaphors upon their lips, the milk of human kindness in their hearts, the sunshine of transparent sympathy in their faces, and the firm, comprehensive grasp of fraternal greeting in the proffered hand. In other words, a pronounced personality, enthroned by human choice and wielding the sceptre of righteousness.

Pungent preachers are better than polished preachers. Christ selected fishermen, not finished men. He selected men to announce the glad tidings of the gospel who would not simply aim to impress people so that they would come again, but men who would go out into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come in.

Plain preaching leads to powerful practicing. A sermon ought to be composed of strong heads and hard hits. The direct preacher, imbued with the right spirit, will by his very directness draw the people to him. When John exclaimed, "Oh, generation of vipers!" the whole generation of vipers turned out, and turned in, to see the man who knew just where to class them and dared to do it. Audacity in a saint commands even the admiration of Satan—it is so much like himself.

"He is a profound preacher," is the explanation for empty pews. What business has the preacher to be profound? "He was born so," replies his admirer. Then he needs to be born again or else borne out of the pulpit and a clear-headed genius put in his place. Christianity cannot afford the luxury of too much profound preaching. The man who cannot make himself

understood ought to be withstood.

Many public speakers, and private ones, too, are striving for what they call "polish"; but as a rule only that which is absolutely dead will bear a fine polish—wood, stone, brass, etc. The polished man is usually the wooden man—painted, varnished and pedestaled upon the exterior of some enterprising narcotic dispensary. Most preachers have a stronger headlight than heart-light.

Humanity longs for an inspiring ministry. Not less culture, but more courage. Not less brilliancy, but the blessing of a divinely imparted fluency. Not less of the sweet spirit of a true and even disposition, but an added touch of divine compassion and Christ-like sympathy. Not less education, but the inspiration of a more abundant life whose source is hidden in the unseen recesses of spiritual communion and soul reinforcement, and pregnant with the experience suggested by those words in the Acts: "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

3. There are two standards in operation in the legal realm when the rich man receives more consideration at the bar of justice than the poor man. If Harry Thaw, the murderer of Stanford White, had been as poor as most of us he would have been sent to the gallows or the electrical chair within six months of the date of his crime, but because he was the son of a millionaire he enjoys every comfort which can be provided in an asylum for the insane, while every possible influence has been brought to bear on judge, jury, district attorney and the state legislature to secure his release. So we judge men on

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this continent not by the Golden Rule but by the rule of Gold. I quote the following from the New York Evangelist:

"It is certainly not pleasing to read that through a strict application of the law at Atlanta, Ga., an eleven year sentence for theft of a five-cent bottle of a soda fountain drink has been affirmed by the Georgia Supreme Court against Ollie Taylor, thirteen years old. The decision ends a three-year struggle by O. F. Taylor, father of the boy, to have the decision set aside. The lad pleaded guilty three years ago to stealing the bottle. He was only ten years old then, and was sentenced to the Fulton Industrial Farm until he was twenty-one years old. The Supreme Court made slight comment on the sentence, it being held that such a matter rested with the trial court. In this connection the decision read: 'The slight value of the article stolen is matter to be given weight by the court imposing the sentence, but it does not nullify the sentence once it is passed properly.' There can be no question of the regularity of the action of the Georgia courts, but it looks like a parody on justice to see countless hardened criminals go scot free while a boy's life is ruined because of a trivial offence."

4. There is a double standard in operation in the commercial realm when a young woman receives only six dollars a week for doing the same work for which a young man would receive ten or twelve dollars a week.

"Girls" are employed because they are "cheap." Cheap girlhood opens the door for cheap womanhood. Cheap womanhood means cheap morality, cheap character, cheap virtue, cheap

religion, cheap Christianity and a cheap civilization. There is something wrong with our social system and commercial realm when young women and girls, by the thousands, are compelled to leave the homes where they are needed and where they belong and seek for a subsistence in competition with their male companions who should naturally be their guardians and protectors. But once in they should be treated on an equal footing with all others and compensated according to service and ability.

5. There is a double standard at work in the realm of international affairs when nation goes to war with nation concerning questions which, if they affected individuals, could be settled speedily and satisfactorily in a court of law. If it is fundamentally wrong, in a well ordered community, for two individuals to engage in a fight matching physical force against physical force, then it cannot be fundamentally right for two nations to engage in a period of universal slaughter concerning questions which can be easily arbitrated. War is the incarnation of brute force. It is bloody but not brainy. If it is brainy, then it is the lowest legitimate application of brain power or mental force. War is brutal, war is barbarous, war is international murder, war is social suicide, war is hell let loose, war is hate deified. Unjustifiable war is the sum of all villainies. Tennyson's prophecy is sure to be fulfilled and that, please God, within a brief half century:

"When the war drums throb no longer
And the battle flags are furled—
In the parliament of man,
The federation of the world."

6. There is a double standard in oper-

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ation in a man's soul when he forgets the principles of his youth in order to gain wealth, favor or social position. "Where, oh, where, are the visions of the morning?"—"Gone, alas, like our youth too soon!" Visions of God? Visions of Christ! Visions of purity! Visions of virtue! Visions of home! Visions of character! Visions of destiny! Gone—Gone—Gone—Dissipated by the force of an earthly gravitation. The voice of God in the soul drowned by the rattle of moving wheels and jostling chariots. The clear air of the morning has become the dusty smoky atmosphere of the noon hour.

Henry George affirmed that so fine a man as Herbert Spencer, when young and honest, defended the principle of the joint right of all men to the use of the land, but later, when fortune smiled upon him, he turned completely "right about face" and supported the monopolies and property rights which formerly he had so eloquently and so bitterly opposed and attacked. Prosperity and social recognition (whatever that is) had killed the genuine instincts of his heart. How often we have seen a man surrender his soul for a bubble, a ribbon, a button, a plaything. Just for a handful of silver he left us, Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat.

7. There is a double standard in operation in the social circle where the successful man is admitted without any regard to the moral quality of his success. We live in an age when men and women, especially women, worship success. Blessed is the man who succeeds. All past sins—sins of omission and sins of commission—are judged in the light of a present success. What difference does it make if a man only succeeds! If he

only "gets there." He may neglect his church, scorn his Bible, reject his Christ, break the Sabbath, forsake his friends, turn his back on everything which is pure, healthy, holy and honorable and fling his conscience overboard, but what difference does it make if he only gets there—say some.

A clean man is a national asset. A pure woman is the incarnation of the true national glory. A citizen who loves justice and hates evil is better than a battleship. The strength of any community consists of and exists in the men who are pure, clean, upright and straightforward, ready for the right and sensitive to every approach of evil. There must be a standard of citizenship. Let us test men by the words of the poet, Alfred Tennyson: "I would pluck my hand from a man, even if he were my greatest hero or dearest friend, if he wronged a woman or told her a lie."

There is an aristocracy of wealth, an aristocracy of culture, an aristocracy of brains, an aristocracy of labor and an aristocracy of character. The aristocracy of character is the aristocracy of heaven. It is carved out of the vital forces and built on the fundamental. It is the only thing which endures; character is the most powerful thing in the world. John Wesley was carried to his grave by six poor men. He left behind him two silver spoons—and the Methodist Church. O! what an illustration of power and influence. According to the will of Martin Luther, he left behind him (if we may use his own words), "No ready money, no coin, no treasure of any sort." And yet what a treasure of influence is wrapt up in that name—Martin Luther. Character is success. Character is immortal. Character is

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everlasting. He who has it belongs to the aristocracy of the skies.

8. There are men who indulge in the luxury of a double standard whenever they are brought face to face with the application of a personal truth. They have great skill in the application of the truth—to other people. And the principles which they always apply to other people they sometimes fail to take to themselves. I sat, one day, in the office of a successful business man in the city of Boston. He thought in millions and was a leading character in business circles. It was Monday morning and on the previous Sunday this man had listened to an eloquent discourse by the famous New England divine—Phillips Brooks. It had stirred his soul and he was therefore in a mood to take me into his confidence, in things spiritual, and reveal to me a few of the deep convictions of his soul. These convictions had been revived and emphasized by the wonderful discourse of the previous day. He exclaimed: "Mr. Gordon, I cannot tell you what a contempt I have for a man who is dishonest and untruthful—I hate a dishonest man!" There was fire in his eye, soul in his voice and conviction expressed in the lines of his face. He meant every word he said. He thought within himself that he was, personally, the incarnation of honesty and sincerity—and yet, this very man, under the pressure of financial stress committed perjury and forged dishonest documents in order to breast the waves of commercial disaster.

I saw him in his dying hour—as the shadow of the State prison was falling athwart his pathway and death was approaching as a sweet release from all his worry and pain. And the secret of his

sad ending was this—that which he had regarded as a crime for any body else, was, under the circumstances, a virtue in himself. He was the victim of a double standard.

9. There are young men who have a double standard in the matter of family pride and parental respect. For instance a certain young man of my acquaintance would be prone to ask for an immediate explanation if one should utter a word which would in any way reflect upon the character of his mother. Utter one word which could be construed as an insult to his mother and he would knock you down without a moment's hesitation. And yet this self same young man by carelessness and dissipation is breaking his mother's heart. This is the most cruel application of the double standard of which I have any knowledge. Strange that he cannot see that his mother's hair is turning white. Here is the youth who would not endure even from his boon companion a suggestion which would reflect on his mother's character and yet he is driving a dagger into her heart. He is doing what he would permit no one else to do and doing it with a vengeance. He has great pride in his family name but it does not permit him to be kind to the best friend he has on earth—even his own mother. Remember Kipling's words:

If I were hanged on the highest hill
I know whose love would follow me still.
If I were drowned in the deepest sea
I know whose tears would come down to
me.

If I were damned in body and soul
I know whose prayers would make me
whole.

Mother o' mine. Mother o' mine.

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ELECTRICAL SPARKS.

The grandest moment in a man's life is when he becomes conscious of his soul.

The soul is the birth-place of all those beautiful things created by the imagination. Said Raphael: "I dream dreams and then paint my dreams."

God never inspires one soul at once—alone—separately. When God speaks to the prophet, he speaks to the people.

The greatest inspirations have always come to the race through a human personality. God speaks to the man of God. The man of God speaks to the sons of men.

There is a caution which is cowardice and a folly which is divine. Be true to your inspiration.

The Bible is aglow with the highest type of inspiration known to literary adepts or spiritual experts—it has power to move.

The Bible is an ageless book. It deals with themes which are "from everlasting to everlasting."

The great truths of the Bible are deeper than geology, higher than astronomy, longer than history, vaster than nature, larger than literature.

Wonderful book! Wonderful in unity and variety. Wonderful in doctrine and prophecy. Wonderful in the simplicity of its teaching.

What a dead thing is a book if there is no one to read it!

The Bible is the best read book; the most thoroughly studied book. Jesus Christ is its greatest hero; His incarnation its greatest fact; His resurrection its greatest event; His return to earth its most glorious promise; sin its saddest fact; salvation its gladdest fact; sanctification its most glorious prophecy.



